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Libby residents urged to participate in home heating survey

By Bob Habeck

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Lincoln County Health Department, in cooperation with the University of Montana and Montana Tech will be conducting a telephone survey of Libby area residents from mid-December 2004 to mid-January 2005 about woodstoves.

The woodstove survey is intended to identify types of wood-burning appliances, types and amounts of fuel burned, and frequency of woodstove use.

Air pollution monitoring for small-sized particulate matter or "fine" particulate matter has been conducted in Libby since 1999. Monitoring results for the years 2000 to 2003 indicate high concentrations of fine particulate matter that exceed public health standards. Technical studies were con-

ducted to determine the sources of this air pollution. Results from the technical studies indicate the majority of fine particulate matter comes from residential woodstove smoke.

The breathing of fine particulate matter is associated with increased respiratory disease, decreased lung functioning and premature death. Libby area residents are encouraged to participate in this brief but important woodstove survey for the protection of public health.

Woodstove survey information will be used to better understand current wood burning practices and to provide the community with opportunities to reduce air pollution caused by woodstoves while preserving economical ways to heat homes.

*(Bob Habeck is an employee of
DEQ.)*